

THE DECAY OF PIPING.

SCOTS DEPLORE THE LAPSE OF OLD CUSTOMS—STORY OF THE BAGPIPE.

Once every year the Scotchmen of New-York lay aside their American habits and sometimes their American clothes, and for a few hours become clansmen again. This occasion is the annual outing of the New-York Caledonian Club. The last outing was successful. Like the forty-three previous entertainments, and the dancing, the games and the merry-making will be remembered and spoken of until it is time to plan for the next picnic. But there are members of the organization and also Scotchmen who are not in the fold who think that these outings are not what they used to be; that they will never be quite as attractive as they were in their best days until the piping competitions are revived.

Until five years ago one of the features of the Caledonian Day was this contest. The pipers played their best. Their work was judged by a committee, and the man who was pronounced the winner because of his performance on the pipes and his appearance carried away his prize with all the pomp of a hero. In the eyes of many of the spectators the prize piper was higher in rank than the men who excelled in the games and at dancing. The men who failed to win a prize practised hard during the next year, learned new tunes and invented new variations on old ones in order to win the laurels at the next contest, and gave lessons to boys who hoped some day to be recognized as pipers.

"But now there's no incentive," said a Caledonian piper, "and the consequence is that piping is going down hill. No one takes lessons, and those who do know how to play do not practise enough. The only people who know good pipe music when they hear it are those who were raised in Scotland, where people know what a pipe is. In this country fakirs are allowed to play, and their performances give people a false idea of the bagpiper. They are responsible for the impression that all pipe music is disagreeable and inharmonious."

There are only about twelve pipers in New-York. They all play on the Scotch pipes, and with a few exceptions they play by note. The instruments used by these men all come from Scotland. All the tunes also are imported.

"Once in a while," said the piper, "you can hear a piper do a popular tune, but it doesn't sound right. Nothing seems to come so well from the pipes as the old Scotch tunes named for people and places dear to the Scotchman."

"The bagpipe has not declined in popularity in Europe. The Scotch regiments still have their pipers, and no great house would be complete without a piper. He always goes with the head of the house, and when at home he plays every morning and on all occasions of ceremony. The piper greets the guest on his arrival and the strains of the pipe bid him farewell."

An antiquarian and a student of folklore who has made the history of the bagpipe a study when asked to tell what he knew about bagpipes said:

THE HISTORY OF THE BAGPIPE.

"It's bagpipes you want to know about, is it? Well, if that's all the information you're after this is the shop for it. Look at the pretty picture of some specimens in the collection of my friend Eugene de Bricqueville at Versailles, and didn't I see that same friend handling a pretty little instrument with carved ivory pipes in it this summer in Paris, and hear him try to persuade the jury of Classe Dix-sept that a man who could make so pretty a musical bag at the tail end of the nineteenth century ought to get a gold medal or a grand prix or a cross of the Legion of Honor, or some such distinction? Yea, verily, I did. But that was a French bag, and they called it a musette. The pipes in the picture, too, are French, and relics of the time when kings and queens, ladies and nobles, thought it a graceful pastime to play at shepherds and shepherdesses, and sing dainty pastorals to the drone of the pipes."

"The history of the instrument? If I were a Highlander I'd bet my fillibeg that it was invented in Scotland, for doesn't Aristides Quintilianos tell about its prevalence in the Scottish Highlands ever so long ago, and can anybody remember when it wasn't used to tune up the Highlanders to fighting pith? But if I were an Irishman I'd swear by the piper that played before Moses that it came into existence in the Emerald Isle, and that the piper himself hailed from the old sod. However, seeing as how I'm only an American with a love for study and antiquities, I'm bound to say that neither Scotchman nor Irishman invented the bagpipes, but that it came to them both, in all probability, from the Romans."

"The ancient peoples of Italy had the instrument, and distributed it over Europe, as they did their laws and other things. Singularly enough, the Italian peasants preserve a record of the source from which they may have derived it in the name which they give it. The common Italian name is cornamusa, but in country districts you may still hear it spoken of as the zampogna, and if you are interested in the philology of the subject you may find in that word not only traces of the Arabic zummārah bi-soan and the Greek symphonia, but also of the Chaldean samponia, or samponyah. I guess samponia is Chaldean; at any rate it's in the Biblical Book of Daniel, which has about the earliest reference to the bagpipes that I know about. All the words that I have men-

tioned with their likeness in physiognomy mean bagpipe, although you never would have guessed it from the translation which the Seventy gave to the Chaldean word in the third chapter of Daniel. They called it dulcimer, which was and is a stringed instrument, played upon with hammers. You remember the passage—it is in the story about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the three Hebrew gentlemen who refused to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the King had set up, though all good citizens had been commanded so to do at what time they heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltory, dulcimer and all kinds of music. The Old Testament revisers

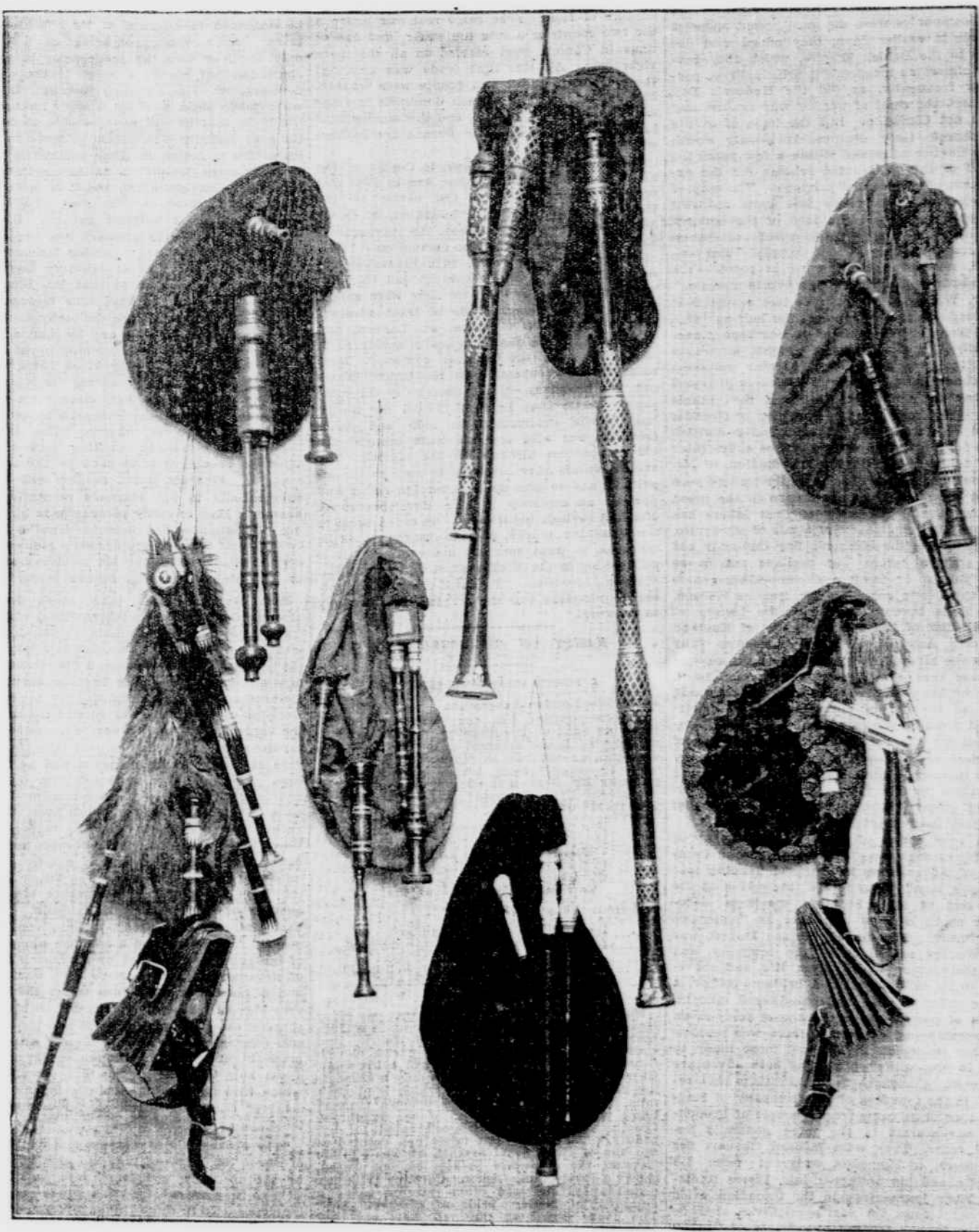
material of the old wind reservoirs suggest that the bagpipes came from the East. It was natural enough in the countries where water bottles were made of the skins of animals that the same skins should be used as the receptacle for wind. In Poland and the Ukraine the bagpipe used to be called Kosh—still is, undoubtedly—because the bag used to be made out of a goat's skin unchanged in shape, even the head with horns being retained. Kosh is Slavic for goat. Even in my pretty French picture you will see how the unspeakably old custom has been retained.

"Well, the old Greeks had the instrument and so did the Romans, through whom, as I

P. Hen.—Or an old lion, or a lover's lute. Fal.—Yea, or the drone of a Lincolnshire bagpipe.

"Here, by the way, is a good story to illustrate that there are savage breasts that music, or rather bagpipe music, cannot soothe. It is from an old Scottish writer:

As a Scotch bagpiper was traversing the mountains of Ulster, he was one evening encountered by a hunger starv'd Irish wolf. In this distress, the poor man could think of nothing better than to open his wallet and try the effects of his hospitality. He did so, and the savage swallowed all that was thrown to him with so improving a voracity as if his appetite was just but coming to him. The whole stock of provision, you may be sure, was soon spent,



BAGPIPES AND MUSETTES.

From the collection of Eugene de Bricqueville, Versailles.

fifteen years ago put 'bagpipes' as a marginal reading, not being brave enough to follow the musical scholars, who had long told them that the Chaldean word meant bagpipe. But what can you do with Bible translators? There is one case in the Old Testament where you may take your choice between 'instruments of music' and 'concubines.' That's a pretty how d'ye do, isn't it? Oh! yes; the bagpipes. Don't you like philology?

THE FORERUNNER OF THE ORGAN.

"You may now make your own guess as to which of the peoples of antiquity first conceived the idea of sticking pipes or whistles into a bag so that by filling the bag with wind they could blow more of them at once than they could with the mouth. That is the interesting feature in the development of musical instruments that the bagpipe illustrates. It's the primitive organ, don't you see. The wind chest of the modern organ, in which wind is forced by means of bellows, is only a development of the ancient windbag which had pipes stuck into it and was inflated with breath from the player's lungs. And here attention ought to be called to the fact that, although the Irish didn't invent the bagpipe, to them is conceded the credit of having introduced the improvement (doubtless suggested by the organ) of a supply bellows worked by the elbow of the player. The shape and

have said, it was doubtless transplanted to the British Islands. Nero was a brave old piper, and if he made music at all at the burning of Rome it may have been the bagpipe that he played. It couldn't have been the fiddle, as the popular story goes, because there was no fiddle in Nero's day. When, toward the end of his career, the bloody Emperor got into trouble with his Spanish and Gallic legions, he made a vow that if he should hold on to the government he would celebrate his victory with games at which he himself would appear as performer on the hydraulic organ, the choric flute and the bagpipe (Tibia utricularis).

"Do I like the music of the bagpipe? My dear boy, I like all things old, like Goldsmith—old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine—but in this case my liking is largely one of sentimental curiosity. I have never persuaded myself that because I have an unquenchable thirst for national and savage music of all kinds, therefore all national and savage music is beautiful and fit for art. The scale of the bagpipe is not just according to our hearing, and things out of tune are painful. Still, the instrument does not affect me as Shylock says it affects some men, nor do I always think its tone as melancholy as Falstaff describes it in the first part of 'Henry IV':

Fal.—'Blood, I am as melancholy as a gib-cat or a lugg'd bear.

and now his only resource was to the virtue of the bagpipe, which the monster no sooner heard than he took to the mountains with the same precipitation that he had come down. The poor piper could not so perfectly enjoy his deliverance but that, with an angry look at parting, he shook his head and said: 'Ay! Are these your tricks? Had I known your humor you should have had your music before supper!'

"How do pipers learn? I fancy that the art is in a sort of way hereditary, and therefore, like reading and writing in the estimation of Dogberry, it comes by nature. 'Tom, Tom, the Piper's son' learns it from his father. But there are modern methods for the bagpipe, and anciently there were pipers' schools in Scotland. Leastwise it is of record that George Mackie, 'the reformer of the Lowland pipes,' attended a school for pipers for seven years. The music that is printed for the pipes now is printed in the usual notation, but that is of comparatively recent occurrence. Formerly the pipe tones had their own system of symbols, with outlandish names."

HOW COSTUMES CHANGE.

From The Denver Post.

How customs do change! A Honolulu paper thinks it exceedingly bad taste for men to go about in tennis suits without a coat. But a few short years ago the average native down there wore but little more than a brown cuticle and a feeling of lassitude.